

the al-Qaida insurgents. I agree with that part of the President's strategy.

However, most of the troops—some 17,500—are scheduled to go into Baghdad, in the midst of the sectarian violence, and that is where I disagree. I point out to the Senate, the President's strategy is predicated on the fact of the Iraqi Army being reliable. Now, will it be reliable? If the President's strategy is predicated on that fact of the Iraqi Army being reliable, one would think the administration has come to the conclusion the Iraqi Army will be reliable. The fact is, they haven't.

In testimony after testimony by administration witnesses, not one witness in any of the hearings that have been held in the committees upon which I have the privilege of serving—the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate Committee on Armed Services, the Senate Intelligence Committee—not one witness has been able to state that the Iraqi Army will be reliable. To the contrary.

The Secretary of Defense, the new commander of American forces in Iraq, the new combatant commander for the United States Central Command—every one of them has been unable to answer in the affirmative that the Iraqi forces are going to be reliable. As a matter of fact, a few days ago the Secretary of Defense said to the Senate Committee on Armed Services that we will have to wait and see if they are reliable. The very underpinning of the President's strategy for success is an unknown.

I bring to the Senate's attention what has been released 2 days ago. This is the unclassified version of the National Intelligence Estimate. This is the best estimate by our intelligence community. Listen to what they have to say on exactly this subject. I am reading from the unclassified version.

Despite real improvements, the Iraqi security forces, particularly the Iraqi police, will be hard pressed in the next 12 to 18 months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities, and particularly to operate independently against the Shia militias with success. Sectarian divisions erode the dependability of many units. Many are hampered by personnel and equipment shortfalls and a number of Iraqi units have refused to serve outside of areas where they have been recruited.

That is word for word the National Intelligence Estimate, unclassified version, that says the same thing as Secretary Gates, General Petraeus, Admiral Fallon, and the soon-to-be new Army Chief of Staff, General Casey, who served for the last 2½ years in Iraq.

I come back to the question I continue to ask. If the President's plan for success by an escalation of troops in Baghdad is predicated on the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi security forces being reliable—since they are to take the burden of the clearing and then the holding of an area—and if no one can state they are reliable, why are we pursuing this plan of an escalation of forces into Baghdad?

We hope they are going to be reliable. We hope for the success of our forces. The stakes are high, unquestionably, of stabilizing Iraq. But is this the wisest course, putting 17,500 more American forces in Baghdad at high risk? In this Senator's opinion, the very underpinning, the foundation of the President's plan, is undermined by virtue of the fact that none of the administration principals can answer the question that they are reliable. They can't answer that question. Therefore, I do not think it is in the best interests of our country or of our troops to escalate these forces into Baghdad.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OBAMA). The Senator from Oklahoma.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I spend a few minutes talking about the supposed continuing resolution we are going to have that is really an omnibus. Every time we have an omnibus, the American people get hurt. The reason is we play games.

We came off an election in November of 2006 where we had the claim made that the party in power had used earmarks irresponsibly, had played the budget gimmicks, had done all these things. We had a claim we would work toward bipartisanship, be honest and open in what we do. I come to challenge that in terms of what I would call an "omni terrible" bill.

First, under the rules of the Senate, although we are going to be shut out on amendments, it is harmful for the American public that there are no amendments to this. It is harmful because, first, it destroys comity in this Senate. It creates hard feelings. I would be the first to admit that the procedure that is being used on this was first used by a Republican. It is wrong.

The second thing that is important is there are all sorts of budget gimmicks with it. The quote is we stay within the budget. That is a lie because what they do is they steal money from our grandchildren which they will get back on the next supplemental, but that won't have to be within the budget limitations. So we are playing games. Nothing has changed about the Senate and the wink and the nod to the American public about what is happening to our future financial conditions. Mr. President, \$3.1 billion out of this will be transferred to the next supplemental to pay for things that absolutely have to happen with our troops in terms of transferring them from Germany and the BRAC relocation process. That has all been stolen so we can do other things. They may be a priority, but maybe something else should be eliminated rather than to break the budget and charge more to our grandkids. So that is not true.

The third thing that is extremely wrong with this is the claim that this has no earmarks. In 2006 appropriations

bills, 96 percent of all earmarks were in report language. That means there is a bill that is a law and then there is language that accompanies the bill that is not law. That is where we find most of the shenanigans going on in Congress. And it is equal among Democrats and Republicans as far as the earmarks.

To make the claim that there are no earmarks in this bill is an outright falsehood that the American people should not accept. The reason it is false is there is a little statement in this bill that these earmarks don't carry the force of law. It doesn't say they eliminated them. But you know what. They don't carry the force of law now. They haven't for the last 10 or 12 years. They haven't ever carried the force of law, but they carry the force of coercion because the agencies know if this is written into the report language and they don't do it, there is retribution they will face when it comes to the Congress and the appropriations process.

Ninety-four percent of all the earmarks that were in 2006 in these bills are in this bill. To claim otherwise is inaccurate and it should make the people of America reject with disdain how this Senate operates.

I remind this Senate that it wasn't but 2 or 3 weeks ago that Senator DEMINT put in transparency of earmarks, much like Congresswoman PELOSI had asked. That was voted against by the majority of the Democrats until they found out they were going to lose. Then we modified it so they could vote "yes" after they had voted "no." That is okay if you don't want them, but be honest about it. The fact is, there is no transparency with these earmarks. Most Americans will never know how they got there. The lobbyists will know; the Members will know; the campaign checks that come from them will know. But the regular "American Joe" won't know.

So the claim that we are operating under a new standard, the claim that we are going to have bipartisanship, the claim that we are not going to use budget gimmicks is all a farce. It is a farce. Let's change that. Let's give the American people something to be proud of. Let's have the hard debates on the questionable areas on this bill.

I will spend a minute and talk about one area of this bill. The one area where we have been very successful in eliminating HIV infections has been women who are pregnant and are having babies who are HIV infected. In 1996, New York passed a law saying all babies whose mothers' status with HIV wasn't known would be tested, and if they carried the antibodies for the mother, they would be treated. New York, since that time, has gone from at least 500 babies a year getting infected with HIV to less than 7.

Connecticut passed a law in 1998. They have gone from whatever their level was to zero since 2001. It is an area of hope where we have made tremendous progress in terms of preventing transmission to young babies,

identifying pregnant women so they can be under treatment earlier so they don't go to full-blown AIDS, and preventing infection of other people by identifying people who are infected.

It is all based on an option of being able to opt out. If you do not want to be tested, you do not have to. This bill precludes any moneys to be spent on that. How dare we. How dare we stop the area where we are most effective in the country at preventing HIV infection.

Let me detail that a minute. For a newborn baby—we don't know the mother's status—it only costs us \$10 to identify whether that baby is carrying the antibodies from a woman who is infected with HIV. The treatment, which is 99 percent curative, costs \$75.

Now, to abandon all this, the treatment to treat a baby infected with HIV—which will result in this—costs a quarter of a million dollars for the first 10 years—\$25,000 a year. So it is not only that we are not preventing an infection, we are not preventing an infection after that through breast-feeding, we are wasting money that could go to buy drugs for those people who cannot afford drugs today who have HIV.

The HIV epidemic is totally controllable. To block the funding, especially for African-American women who carry the burden of this disease in pregnancy, is unconscionable. There is not a good answer for why this prohibition was put into this. And whoever did it—whoever did it—does not care a whit about the innocent children who are going to get the HIV infection, does not care about the African-American woman who is carrying it but does not know she has it, who could be treated and never progress to AIDS. What they care about is politics and political correctness.

Former President Clinton recently announced he thinks we need to reassess, we need to be testing. That is a 180-degree turn from where he was. Why? Because he looks at this country and says: Why aren't we controlling this epidemic? It is because we are not testing, we are making it too hard to be tested. We have had great advances in drugs. We have great ways to prevent transmission. But if we do not know who is carrying it—and one out of every three people in this country who have HIV does not know they are infected. So what we should be about is making testing easier—easier to do, more available, more accessible—and in a way that will make a major impact on people's lives.

I am sorry the majority leader has decided to run this bill this way because I think it portends lots of things for the future of this body that are not going to be good. Nobody can accuse me of being partisan on earmarks. I went after my own party harder than I went after anybody else. I did not see anybody last year from the other side come down here and challenge an earmark. I saw nobody in the last 2 years from the other side come down here

and challenge an earmark. And then to claim there are no earmarks in this bill, and to try to do a wink and a nod to the American public that oh, yeah, we are fixing it, when in fact 95 percent of them are there, it gives us cause to pause: Has anything changed? It has not. It is still the game, American public. The only way you are going to have this place cleaned up is transparency in everything we do.

I hope the majority leader will reconsider his position on not allowing amendments to this bill. If he does not, one, he hurts the next year and a half in this body in terms of relationship and fairness; but, No. 2, he hurts the American public worse than that.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for beginning to talk about this Omnibus appropriations bill that is coming to the floor in the form of a continuing resolution.

At this point, we are told the amendment tree will be immediately filled and there will be no amendments allowed to this over \$400 billion Omnibus appropriations bill. It is not too late for the distinguished leader of the Democrats, the majority leader, to allow some amendments. He said on the floor yesterday he was open to discussions and thought that probably maybe some amendments on the Democratic side and the Republican side would be in order.

When you take something that is this big—\$400 billion—this number of appropriations bills, and you see the incredible changes that have been made in these bills, without any hearings, without sufficient time to even digest everything that is in these bills, I think a few amendments are warranted.

I think Senator COBURN pointed out something that surely no one intended—surely no one intended—to stop babies from being able to have the HIV/AIDS test that would give them a chance at a quality of life which they will not be able to get if they do not have this test and catch potential AIDS in their bodies right at birth.

I am going to talk about one I know a lot about, and that is the military construction and BRAC. Military construction is completely dropped in this bill, completely dropped from last year's military construction bill. We passed this bill in the Senate. We tried to go to conference. The Senate sent it to conference. But we were not able to get the House to agree; therefore, the bill died last year.

I will say that it is not the Democrats' fault that bill died last year. But, nevertheless, the Democrats now are in charge, and I would ask the distinguished leader to acknowledge we have bills that have not been fully passed, conferenced, and sent to the President, but a continuing resolution that is unamendable is not the right

approach, particularly if we take to heart what the distinguished leader said was going to be different about the Senate under his leadership.

In fact, there is precedent. In 2003, the Republicans took over the Senate after the Democrats had been in control. There were 11 appropriations bills undone. Those 11 bills were put together in an Omnibus appropriations by the Republicans. There were 6 days of debate. There were 100 amendments offered. The majority of the amendments that were added to the bill were Democratic amendments.

So I think that is the precedent we should follow in the Senate. This is a body that is supposed to allow for discussion, debate, transparency, and minority rights. We are in the minority. We know that. But we have never been denied on such a continuing basis the ability to even affect legislation or amend legislation. That seems to be a pattern in the first 5 weeks of this session. I do not think it is what was intended by the majority when they took control of the Senate, and I think there is a chance to come together and maybe go a different way; that is, to allow amendments on major bills.

We now have a bill that is called a continuing resolution, and it strips BRAC, it strips the base closing construction that will keep the Base Closing Commission results that were adopted by Congress that are the law of this country from going forward with the 6-year timetable that was set out by Congress.

We have 6 years to do the construction that will prepare bases that are going to receive troops and to close bases in an expeditious manner so the cities that have these large amounts of land will be able to take over those bases and do something productive for their respective cities with those bases.

What we have now is a delay that will last 1 year. It is going to cause a backup in the system of adhering to the congressional responsibility for BRAC. It is going to begin to handicap the ability to move troops from overseas that are scheduled as early as this year to move.

Mr. President, 12,000 troops will begin to move that are part of the rebasing operation from foreign bases to American bases. Twelve thousand will not be able to move with all of the amenities we require.

Let me read excerpts from a few of the military leaders of our country, letters that were sent on behalf of the military of our country, asking that Congress act on both the military construction bills that were passed by both Houses of Congress but not conferenced last year and the \$3 billion that was taken out of the budget and spread throughout the other bills that are in this omnibus continuing resolution.

The Democrats have taken \$3 billion out of military construction to effect our mandate of a 6-year period in which the military has to make the

transfers we adopted in BRAC. It takes \$3 billion out of this year's budget and transfers it to other priorities that have never had 1 day of hearing and never had even a discussion in the committees.

This is a letter from Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense:

As you prepare to complete the Joint Continuing Resolution, we urge you to include provisions to permit the execution of the Fiscal Year 2007 President's Budget request [as it relates to the Department of Defense].

Funding programs at FY 2006 levels under a year-long Continuing Resolution—

Which is what is in this bill—

would negatively impact critical priorities and missions within the Department. If the [continuing resolution] levels are set at [these] enacted levels, the Department will face shortfalls of over \$1 billion in the Defense Health Program—

Part of that is accommodated in this bill—

\$0.5 billion in Basic Allowance for Housing, and \$4 billion in the Base Realignment and Closure programs.

Now, this was sent before this omnibus continuing resolution came over. Part of those are funded but not the Base Realignment and Closure programs. Mr. President, \$3 billion of the \$4 billion requested was taken out.

Secretary Gates goes on to say:

Delays in completing BRAC could result in postponing scheduled redeployments from overseas stations to the United States. Deferring BRAC implementation would also impede community efforts to quickly transition the affected bases to civilian use, so that the impact of BRAC on local economies can be reduced. Furthermore, congressionally approved BRAC recommendations were developed to provide cost savings benefits; any delays will jeopardize those benefits.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter I have just read, addressed to Senator BYRD, with a copy to Senator COCHRAN, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,

Washington, DC, January 26, 2007.

Hon. ROBERT C. BYRD,

Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: As you prepare to complete the Joint Continuing Resolution, we urge you to include provisions to permit the execution of the Fiscal Year 2007 President's Budget request.

Funding programs at FY 2006 levels under a year-long Continuing Resolution (CR) would negatively impact critical priorities and missions within the Department. If the CR levels are set at FY 2006 enacted levels, the Department will face shortfalls of over \$1 billion in the Defense Health Program (DHP), \$0.5 billion in Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), and \$4 billion in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) programs. Funding for the DHP is needed to avoid reductions in health care benefits for members, retirees, and their families; funding for BAH is needed to ensure that members receive timely housing payments.

Delays in completing BRAC could result in postponing scheduled redeployments from overseas stations to the United States. Deferring BRAC implementation would also

impede community efforts to quickly transition the affected bases to civilian use, so that the impact of BRAC on local economies can be reduced. Furthermore, congressionally approved BRAC recommendations were developed to provide cost savings benefits; any delays will jeopardize those benefits.

Thank you for your help on this important matter. Our warfighters will be the direct beneficiaries of your assistance.

Sincerely,

ROBERT M. GATES.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the \$3 billion that has been cut out is going to affect many important bases in our country. One of the bases is in Texas. Fort Bliss is in great need of military construction because it is designated by the Department of Defense to receive 30,000 troops, and there is much that needs to be done to prepare the base for those overseas redeployments.

I happen to know that one the best, of course. But let's talk about Fort Riley, KS, where a good number of the redeployed troops are also going to be stationed. They are very concerned in Kansas. I know Senator ROBERTS and Senator BROWNBARK plan to speak this afternoon. But I am speaking now because I am hoping the majority leader will decide that maybe we do need some amendments to this bill, that maybe we can work together in a bipartisan way and work these out.

These BRAC budget provisions have been adopted by the Senate. The military construction appropriations bill was a quite bipartisan bill that was adopted last year by the Senate as well.

When you look at Fort Riley in Kansas, which is one of the major-need areas for BRAC funding that we are going to talk about—I know Senators ROBERTS and BROWNBARK will expand on it—you have a Battle Command Training Center. This is for troops coming from Europe to Fort Riley for training. The major part of the military construction for Fort Riley is a training center. You have runway improvements, a child development center for quality of life for our troops—all of this is at Fort Riley, KS—a soldier-family medical clinic at Fort Riley, a division headquarters. All of that is Fort Riley, KS, which is one of the major areas that would be hit by this delay in taking out the \$3 billion from BRAC.

I have been talking to Senators CHAMBLISS and ISAKSON of Georgia. They will have a huge hit as well in Fort Benning. Fort Benning is another of those that is in need of great enhancement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas has consumed 10 minutes.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I ask unanimous consent to extend my time for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I will not object, but may I inquire how much time remains to the minority under morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Six minutes 15 seconds.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I did not realize that. I ask the Senator from Texas how much time he would like to have.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I was hoping to have at least 5 minutes, but I see that time is running short.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I will give him 5 minutes. Just let me have the rest of that time and notify me when there is 5 minutes remaining then I will yield to the Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas has 1 minute.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. In Georgia, Fort Benning is going to be a major loser because of the delay. You have two major training barracks and training brigade complex units that will not be able to be started, a fire and movement range, a modified record fire range, brigade headquarters, training barracks complex No. 2, and the stationary gunnery range.

Again, we are trying to enhance training for our troops. Many of those being brought home, the 70,000 troops being brought home in the Department of Defense plan, are being brought home to increase their training capability.

I encourage and ask Senator REID to reconsider. Let's have some agreement on equal numbers of Republican and Democratic amendments. Let's have some say in this Omnibus appropriations bill. I cannot imagine we would pass a bill such as this with no amendment whatsoever in either House of Congress. I don't think that is what the American people hoped for when they voted last November.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized for the remainder of the time, 4 minutes 20 seconds.

Mr. CORNYN. I appreciate the courtesy of the senior Senator from Texas in giving me a few minutes to speak on this continuing resolution.

This is, to say the least, disappointing. We have a bill that addresses more than \$400 billion worth of spending but cuts \$3.1 billion from our men and women in uniform for the Department of Defense at a time when we hope to be able to build facilities in the United States to accommodate them and their families as we bring them back from places such as Europe and Korea and elsewhere. We know that we have an all-voluntary military. As a member of a military family myself—my father was in the Air Force for 31 years—it is more than just the individual servicemember who serves; it is a family proposition.

I urge the majority leader and the majority to reconsider this cut of \$3.1 billion in the very meat and bone of what it takes to recruit and retain a volunteer military. As the saying goes, you recruit an individual servicemember but you retain a family. These kinds of cuts, \$750 million of which will

come out of the money that is allocated for the State of Texas, are just extraordinarily unwise.

I have heard rumors to the effect that the majority is going to try to add this money back in the supplemental appropriations bill we will be taking up, I guess sometime in March. Of course, that would be a budgetary trick which would exacerbate the budget deficit and be in stark conflict with the kind of rhetoric we have heard from our colleagues on the majority side who have said that we need a pay-as-you-go budget. In other words, if there is going to be spending, there has to be commensurate offsets.

Cutting out of this so-called continuing resolution or Omnibus appropriations this \$3.1 billion for our military families and then coming back and adding it in as emergency spending in a supplemental avoids the budgetary requirement of an offset and, thus, will add to additional deficits which are irresponsible and certainly in conflict with the statements our colleagues have made on the other side.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Would the Senator from Texas yield for a question?

Mr. CORNYN. I certainly will.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I was just listening to his statement and agree that there is going to be a budget gimmick if this comes up in a supplemental. But is the Senator from Texas a part of an amendment we would like to proffer which would restore \$39.1 billion but cut .73 percent across the board in all of the other accounts in this bill except for defense, veterans, and homeland security, so that we could pay for it, be fiscally responsible, and yet do what we need to do for the Active-Duty military, not to drain their operations to fund military construction projects that should be funded in this bill? Is the Senator aware of that?

Mr. CORNYN. I am proud to be a cosponsor, along with the distinguished senior Senator from Texas, of an amendment which would accomplish that goal. This is the way to handle our budgetary responsibilities appropriately. I implore the majority leader to allow us an opportunity to have amendments and to have a full and fair debate on this continuing resolution. We started this Congress in a spirit of compromise, but certainly if the amendment tree is filled and we are denied an opportunity to have debate and consideration of an amendment such as that, it would be extraordinarily disappointing and in conflict with some of the early rhetoric and hopes we all had for bipartisan cooperation.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY, JR., TO BE CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of Calendar No. 15, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of General George W. Casey, Jr., to be Chief of Staff, United States Army.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 50 minutes for debate, with the time equally divided and controlled by the senior Senator from Michigan, Mr. LEVIN, and the senior Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, or their designees, and 10 minutes for each of the leaders.

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, may I inquire, how much time do I have again?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 50 minutes total. The Senator from Arizona gets 15 minutes and 15 minutes for the Senator from Michigan, and the leaders have 10 minutes each.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Chair.

I ask the clerk to tell me when I have consumed 8 minutes.

I come again this morning to the not particularly pleasant task of opposing the nomination of General Casey to be Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. I preface my remarks, again, with my appreciation for honorable service to the country, his family, and the sacrifices they have made for many years. This isn't a question of character because his character is outstanding; it is a question of judgment.

I will try to put this in context, why I am in opposition. For several years, I and a number of others have bemoaned and complained and criticized and been saddened as we have watched this train wreck in Iraq. Not long after the initial invasion, I came back from a visit to Iraq and visited with the then-Secretary of Defense, who bears great responsibility for this debacle, and history will judge him very badly for his performance as Secretary of Defense. I told him how it was that we were not going to win, we were not going to succeed, that we didn't have enough troops over there, that Anbar Province was going to erupt—basically all the things many of us saw were going to transpire. General Casey, for 2½ years up until recently, would come back to the Congress and say that things were going well. I quoted many quotes yesterday, from time to time, including in 2005, saying we could start withdrawing by 2006 and on and on and on, completely divorced from reality on the ground, as was the Secretary of Defense.

I will state at the beginning that Presidents are responsible, but Presidents also rely on the advice and coun-

sel of their military leaders. That is a normal thing and has happened in every conflict.

President Bush said time and time again: I have said to the American people, as Iraqis stand up, we will stand down. But I have also said our commanders on the ground will make that decision. We will talk to General Casey. On and on. The Army is getting on its feet. We have turned over a lot of territory to the Army. They are good fighters. I have spent a great deal of time with General Abizaid and General Casey. They are in Washington. They are generals who will be happy to tell me the way it is, not the way they think I would like to it be.

Time after time, it has been clear that the President of the United States, as appropriate, has been relying on the advice and counsel of commanders in the field who did not give him appropriate information or recommendations. We are all responsible. In the military, you are responsible for the decisions you make on the battlefield, particularly when they cost our most valuable and important asset—American blood.

In his opening statement at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on September 29, General Casey said: "The capacity of Iraqi security forces has increased quantitatively and qualitatively over the past year" and "we have also developed with the Iraqis a readiness reporting system, not unlike the one we have in place for our own forces. So over the past 18 months we have built enough Iraqi capacity where we can begin talking seriously about transitioning this counterinsurgency mission to them."

Did he realize at the time that statement was wrong? And when did he tell someone?

At the same hearing, General Casey said:

More coalition is not necessarily better. More and more capable Iraqi security forces are better. Increased coalition presence speeds the notion of occupation. It contributes to the dependency of Iraqi security forces on the coalition. It extends the amount of time it will take for Iraqi security forces to become self-reliant and exposes more coalition forces to attacks at a time when Iraqi security forces are increasingly available and increasingly capable.

There has been no sign of that. Why did it take 15 months for General Casey to change that assessment and then not even agree with the new strategy of five additional brigades, which most of us pray is enough and most of us believe is a direct contravention to the Powell doctrine, which is, use overwhelming force in order to gain military victory?

President Bush said General Casey will make decisions as to how many troops we have there. Why did it take 2½ years? Why did it have to take 2½ years of steady degradation for General Casey to figure out we didn't have enough troops there, and the situation is worsening in Iraq.

The NIE that came out yesterday should frighten anyone, any American,